

BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE CONFERENCE CALL WITH
BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBERT P.M. WEIGHILL, DEPUTY COMMANDING
GENERAL OF THE CIVILIAN POLICE ASSISTANCE TRAINING TEAM (CPATT)

DATE: WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18, 2007

.STX

(C) COPYRIGHT 2007, FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, INC., 1000 VERMONT
AVE.
NW; 5TH FLOOR; WASHINGTON, DC - 20005, USA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.
ANY REPRODUCTION, REDISTRIBUTION OR RETRANSMISSION IS
EXPRESSLY PROHIBITED.

UNAUTHORIZED REPRODUCTION, REDISTRIBUTION OR
RETRANSMISSION CONSTITUTES A MISAPPROPRIATION UNDER
APPLICABLE UNFAIR COMPETITION LAW, AND FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE,
INC. RESERVES THE RIGHT TO PURSUE ALL REMEDIES AVAILABLE TO IT IN
RESPECT TO SUCH MISAPPROPRIATION.

FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, INC. IS A PRIVATE FIRM AND IS NOT
AFFILIATED WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. NO COPYRIGHT IS
CLAIMED AS TO ANY PART OF THE ORIGINAL WORK PREPARED BY A
UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT OFFICER OR EMPLOYEE AS PART OF THAT
PERSON'S OFFICIAL DUTIES.

FOR INFORMATION ON SUBSCRIBING TO FNS, PLEASE CALL JACK
GRAEME AT 202-347-1400.

THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT.

GEN. WEIGHILL: Good morning.

OPERATOR: Good morning, sir, and welcome to the bloggers' roundtable
conference call.

GEN. WEIGHILL: Okay.

OPERATOR: Appreciate your joining us this morning, sir. Do you have an
opening statement to start, or should we --

GEN. WEIGHILL: Yeah, I think it's probably -- it would probably be sensible if I -- if I do an introduction. Then you know who I am and what I do, and then to an extent that will frame, I think, your questions that you might have for me.

So I'm -- my name is Brigadier General Rob Weighill. I'm in the British army, and I'm serving within an organization called the Civilian Police Assistance Training Team. I'm the deputy commanding general. And this organization is known as CPATT.

And CPATT's principal task is to assist with the development of the Ministry of the Interior, principally -- you know, I could label this "capacity building." And I have a large team working for me inside the Ministry of Interior building in Baghdad providing expertise, support and advice across all the deputy ministries and the components for which it has responsibility -- which principally we're talking about the Iraqi police, but obviously there are other elements as well.

In addition we have a large number of coalition force personnel across the whole of Iraq whose clear objective is to generate, train and sustain the Iraqi police forces that are helping to create a safe and secure Iraq in which the government of Iraq can establish the democratic rule of law. And I want to make the point that all of this is done alongside and is supported by Iraqi security force colleagues.

The past two years I can estimate that CPATT has assisted with the training of about 200,000 policemen and women in numerous academies and training establishments across Iraq. And it's important to understand that as well as teaching the wide range of policing skills that are required to label them as competent policemen and operate effectively in the current environment, since 2003 for the first time all the recruits have also received lessons and being coached in human rights. And this is an important aspect of their policing duty because it fulfills the vital requirement for them to understand and implement what it means to treat people fairly and with dignity and respect.

I'll just finish off by saying the police force, which numbers pretty close to 300,000 -- of which 200,000 or so are Iraqi police service -- also includes national police, border and ports of entry police service, as well as traffic, highway and patrol, and a large number of employees both in central government here in the Ministry of Interior in Baghdad and also in the provinces to support and administer that large number of forces. And the -- I think the Ministry of Interior, I would say, can be very proud of the 300,000 employees it now has under its jurisdiction in what you can imagine is a highly challenging environment, which by and large the police face on a daily basis and overcome alongside their Iraqi army colleagues and in conjunction with the coalition forces as well.

So that's a little bit of a pitch. I'm basically responsible for the policing side. And I'll be very glad to take some questions.

OPERATOR: Okay. Thank you very much, sir.

And Charlie Quidnunc, you were first online.

Q Pardon me, General. I had my phone on mute.

I had a question about the effect you feel that Sadr leaving the cabinet would have on the operations of the police in Iraq.

GEN. WEIGHILL: We're talking about the -- and it is a rumor -- we have, as far as I know, no substantive fact with regard to six Sadrist MPs leaving the parliament. Or are you talking about elements within the police itself?

Q No, I'm talking about the six Sadrists leaving the cabinet.

GEN. WEIGHILL: Yeah. I should -- it's -- to be frank it's a -- it would be a speculative answer, which I'm not -- I'm not really in a position to give for two reasons: one, because I -- we have no confirmation that those six ministers have actually left, as far as I know, nor indeed can we predict the consequences upon the police.

But -- I mean, what I can say is that contrary to popular belief -- that is that the Ministry of Interior and the Iraqi police are heavily infiltrated from a sectarian perspective, the work that I've done both in the Ministry of Interior and with the police and with my colleagues would suggest otherwise.

Of course, there are infringements of the law and we see that occasionally and those instances surface and are generally well dealt with in accordance with Iraqi law. But the impression that everything is governed by sectarian influences and decision-making I have found to be untrue. And that -- I see a lot of industry, both in the Ministry of Interior supporting those forces and also across the police force, with which I have daily contact.

OPERATOR: Okay. Thank you.

GEN. WEIGHILL: Okay.

OPERATOR: Okay. David Axe (sp).

Q General, thanks for taking the time. What are you doing to root out corruption in the Iraqi police?

GEN. WEIGHILL: Yeah. That's a really good question, and it's one that I get asked the whole time. And if I were to say to you -- you know, two to three days ago, "Probably not a lot" -- I think the situation has changed significantly. And two organizations that exist within the Ministry of Interior -- the internal affairs and the inspector general, who have a large staff both in the Ministry of Interior headquarters -- the ministry in Baghdad -- but also have their own IA and IG staffs in the provinces -- have taken huge steps towards identifying -- through audit, through investigation, through

procedures encouraged by us -- identifying fraud, crime, corruption, to deal with it through the investigative process and for perpetrators to be punished accordingly.

Now in some cases it might be -- it might be that they are released from their duties -- in other words, sacked; in other cases it may be that they're sent to prison and go to trial. I can, for example, say that in January there were about 1,200 cases that were investigated by the IG alone within the Ministry of Interior. That's a large number of cases that have come to the fore.

And I was with the minister of Interior, Mr. Bulani, only this morning, and he repeats it often and says that firstly, you know, he wants a police force that is based on quality rather than quantity, so they've got to be trained, but also he emphatically states he will not put up with corruption. And that -- you know, in the past -- not too distant past, senior officials have been removed when there have been instances that -- where -- instances with the appropriate evidence, individuals have been removed from posts because they've been involved in nefarious activities.

So the answer to your question is that -- you know, they'll never get rid of corruption, but they're making huge strides reducing it. And I'm hugely impressed with the degree to which the staff are focused on this and the number of investigations that are going on to try and reduce the instances of corruption.

I hope that answered your question.

Q Yes. Thank you.

GEN. WEIGHILL: Okay.

OPERATOR: Okay. Mark?

Q General, it's Mark Finkelstein from NewsBusters. As American bloggers, it's a privilege for us to have the opportunity to speak with a British officer, and we appreciate your being with us today.

GEN. WEIGHILL: Yeah, not at all. It's my pleasure.

Q In the wake of the taking of the British sailors and Marines by the Iranians, there was considerable discussion about what British rules of engagement were, particularly vis-a-vis a country that was identified as not being an enemy of the U.K. Could you speak to British army rules for such situations, if for example British army soldiers were to be accosted by Iranian ground troops within Iraq?

GEN. WEIGHILL: Yeah. I mean, as you know, the whole business of the rules of engagement is highly complex. And to be frank, I'm certainly not in a position to describe what rules of engagement were in force with regard to the 15 hostages that were -- the British hostages that were taken to Tehran.

But what I can say -- you know, albeit the fact that I'm a British officer serving in the U.S. military administration rather than the British one -- so there is a distinction here because I'm not serving down in the south with the -- with the British division -- is that by and large the British rules of engagement are simple: If a life is threatened -- either one's own or another life -- then the rules of engagement will allow you to engage in order to prevent loss of life.

And it's -- you know, and along that premise, the very complex way in which rules of engagement are pieced together expressly make this pivotal in terms of a soldier's understanding. You know, it's simple when he's frightened and it's dark and he's not sure what's going on -- using that fundamental principle -- his life or somebody else's life is being threatened -- then he can take all necessary force in order to prevent loss of life. That stands as a guiding light to those individuals. And that will be as much true, I suspect, for the individuals that were involved in the hostage taking instance down in the south with regard to a -- (inaudible).

Q A quick follow-up: What about once people have been taken hostage? Are rules applicable to public statements that they might make?

GEN. WEIGHILL: Yeah. Again, sort of slightly speculative, really, but if a hostage has been taken then -- assuming that that -- the life is not threatened, then the appropriate force would not necessarily be -- would not be -- would not necessarily include the use of force. I think it's so entirely dependent upon the situation that it's almost impossible for me to be able to give you a satisfactory answer.

Q My question was not addressed to the use of force to escape the hostage situation but in terms of public statements made by members of the British military during the period of their captivity.

GEN. WEIGHILL: Yeah. Sorry, I'm not -- I'm perhaps misunderstanding the nature of the question. If you could just clarify your question -- (inaudible) -- to answer it.

Q Yes, certainly. There has been a certain amount of comment and criticism regarding, you know, the apologies made by the British sailors and Marines regarding, you know, their alleged intrusion into Iranian territorial waters. And again, I wonder if there are rules or guidelines for members of the British military regarding those sorts of public statements made during a period of captivity.

GEN. WEIGHILL: Yeah. I'm personally not aware precisely of the circumstances with regard to the statements that were made in this case.

But from a personal perspective, we are trained that in the event where -- if you are incarcerated, you believe that your life is about to be threatened and that a statement could alleviate loss of life or torture, then you may step across that threshold in which

you make a statement that you don't necessarily believe to be the case. I'm only assuming that in this instance, with regard to the people in Tehran, that may have been the case.

But again, it's purely speculative. I'm going to have to say that the American -- the American general I have here and the job that I have keeps me so busy that I -- a lot of that rather passed me by.

Q Right. Understood. Thank you, General.

GEN. WEIGHILL: Not at all.

OPERATOR: Okay. Any other follow-ups?

Q In any random order?

OPERATOR: Any random order. Just identify yourself and your organization.

Q Great. General, this is David Axe again. I work for Aviation Week Group, among others.

GEN. WEIGHILL: Okay.

Q But -- so I've paid a couple visits to various IP training efforts, and one of the consistent problems across the board seem to be imposing a nationwide set of standards for what kind of training ITs need to go through before they, you know, so to speak "get their badge." And I understand a couple years back there was an effort to impose a nationwide standard. Did that ever happen? If not, what are we doing on that front?

GEN. WEIGHILL: Yeah. Let me take the -- as an example of where I think there's positive views rather than a depressing tale, and that's with the national police.

The national police, I'm sure most of you will be aware, have a -- have had a dubious past, and they come with, therefore, a rather dubious reputation -- or have done, you know, since 2003.

But here's an example where, with the setting up of a national police training academy, for example at Numaniyah, which is southeast of Baghdad -- it's near al Kut -- it's a -- it's got a capacity for about 2,000 beds. It runs training for brigades of national police, normally in the region of 1,900-2,000 national policemen in a brigade structure, so it has a brigade headquarters, battalion, and then company structure. And this program is common -- that is the training program is common to all the brigades that come through Numaniyah. It's a standard, tried and now tested training program, approximately four weeks long. It complies, really, with the minister's desire to err on the side of quality rather than quantity, and though it would be nice to get more through, but we simply don't want to compromise on the training standard. And they come literally straight out of Numaniyah in brigade size and get put into Baghdad sitting

alongside and working alongside their Iraqi police brethren and also the Iraqi security forces, particularly the army.

So the answer to your question is -- I don't think anybody's suggesting that they've done the full, you know, 100 meters yet. But they've come a long way to apply a measure of commonality across the training academies. That includes also the Iraqi police achieving certain training standards, ensuring that within the training programs there are mandatory lessons which they have to be exposed, to understand, to pass tests on, in order that they can go out there into the communities, whether it's at the provincial level or within the capital itself, to undertake, you know, some pretty difficult tasks.

So I would say in response to your question, it's a positive rather than a negative. They aren't all the way there yet. There are still -- there are still probably areas in some of the training academies where they haven't been able to do it. But by and large and even since I've been here -- I've only been here two months -- I've seen an improvement almost on a weekly basis in some of these academies that I go and visit. So I think it's a pretty good news story.

And as I said when I did my opening pitch, bear in mind that the coalition have trained, you know, 200,000 policemen in the past probably 12 to 18 months. I mean, that's a significant achievement, and much of this is being done through setting up infrastructure alongside the Iraqis -- some of that is coalition money; some of it is Iraqi money -- with the emphasis on generating professional and competent policemen.

Q Okay. Thank you.

GEN. WEIGHILL: Okay.

Q General, this is Charlie Quidnunc at Wizbang.

I have a question about some --

GEN. WEIGHILL: Sorry, I can only just hear you. You might have to speak up a little bit.

Q I apologize for that.

GEN. WEIGHILL: No worries.

Q This is Charlie Quidnunc -- this is Charlie Quidnunc at Wizbang.

I had a question about something that -- one of your predecessors made a remark that in the past, police would wait in their stations -- back in 2000, 2003 -- wait in the police station for people to come to them and then demand money before they investigate. Have changes been made in that procedure and are the Iraqi police

improving to be more outward facing and entering the joint security stations and being out in front of the people more?

GEN. WEIGHILL: Yeah. Again, that's a really good question because I think that what one may have seen in the past on these sort of occasions is a lack of leadership, a lack of training, and therefore an absence of support and trust between the police and the community.

But I'm not going to put my hand on my heart and say that sort of thing doesn't go on now. But I mean, let's face it: You know, these sort of things go on in our own countries -- in the U.S. and the U.K. But what I can say is that -- I mean, principally through training -- that the leadership element within the Iraqi police -- national police -- is improving all the time. So it's not just a question of getting them through the academies. It's then also educating them. If that leadership is strong, then by and large the levels and frequency of criminality -- whether it's taking bribes; whether it's involved in corruption or indeed involvement in sectarian violence -- tends to diminish.

We have -- that is, the Iraqi police, directed by the Ministry of Interior and supported by the coalition forces, have just conducted a full inspection of all 47 police stations in Baghdad, for example. We've looked at procedures; we've looked at processes; we've looked at accounts; we've looked at infrastructure. We've spend on average a day in each police station, recorded all of the deficiencies -- which may as much be processing in nature; it might be infrastructure -- with the consolidation of that program for a remediation program. And it includes, for example, the standards of the detention cells and the quality of dress of the individual policemen. It's a wide range of factors. This has given us a very good feel for how the police are performing, you know, in what really is the center of gravity -- the epicenter of where a lot of the advance is being experienced -- although we haven't had a chance to analyze all those details yet.

Again, there's a long list of things that need to be done. You know, one would expect that. There's more money needs to be spent on infrastructure and more money needs to be spent on vehicles and the provision of fuel. And for sure some of the processes and procedures need to be sharpened up.

But one thing that hasn't emerged and which has come as a bit of a surprise are large (trenches ?) of perceived corruption. The processes are much tighter than they ever used to be -- particularly the audit of money and payments and things like that. So I think as time goes on it will just get better and better, particularly when we see more management information systems and information technology to apply some technology to some of these issues as well.

Q General, it's Mark Finkelstein again.

During an earlier conference call, one encouraging sign that was mentioned to us was the fact that Sunni sheikhs in Al Anbar province have been encouraging members of their tribes to volunteer. Are you continuing to see that phenomenon?

GEN. WEIGHILL: Yeah, we are, in fact. I mean, I think I was on -- I was doing a conference call not half an hour ago and saying that we've seen a very interesting phenomenon in Al Anbar.

If you think of what the levels of violence that were being reported only a year ago. Ramadi, Fallujah and other places were really almost no-go zones. It was impossible to imagine that any semblance of peace or normality would return to these places. And yet a year down, a mixture of tribal leadership, police leadership -- they've recruited 3,000, 3,500 new recruits, principally Sunni, who will be and are being trained, and the levels of violence have dramatically reduced. So this is really the people saying, you know, "We've had enough of the violence. We want to train people to join the police." They represent -- emphatically they represent the community, and that's a big success story. And funny enough, it's happening in one or two other areas as well. We're seeing a semblance of that happening in Diyala and other places close to Baghdad -- for example, Abu Ghraib.

So you know, these are people who have had enough of violence, want to join the police. There's no shortage of volunteers. In fact we've had to, through -- the Ministry of Interior has decided -- had to place a three-month moratorium on recruiting simply because we don't have the capacity in the training establishments at the moment to deal with the numbers that are volunteering to join the police.

And going back to my original point -- that the minister wants quality and not quantity, and he's keen to make sure that these guys are trained -- they're not just put on the street with an AK-47, stuck on a street corner and told, "Right, you know, you're on your own" -- that they have to be trained across a wide spectrum of policing competencies. And therefore it's better to have -- and these are his words -- "It's better to have a hundred well-trained policemen than it is to have a thousand untrained."

Q Okay. Thank you, General.

GEN. WEIGHILL: Okay.

Q General, this is David Axe again.

First, one quick question: How many trainers do you have working under you?

GEN. WEIGHILL: Oh, that's a good question. Do you know, I would have to put -- I would put a figure of about -- it changes almost day to day because, for example -- and it will be in the newspapers -- there's been PIC -- you know, Provincial Iraqi Control down in Maysan province, so that we reduce people down. But it would be somewhere in the order of about 500 or 600 people -- PTTs -- that's Police Training Teams and the Iraqi police liaison officers. It's something of that order. So there out in the provinces and in Baghdad providing training support to and liaison to the Iraqi police.

Q And is -- are those training teams still a mix of civilian and military?

GEN. WEIGHILL: Yeah, they are a mix. Yeah. Absolutely. Yeah. So we have, you know -- predominantly they are U.S. -- they are a mix of civilian and military.

For example again, I mean, I can -- just speaking on behalf of Numaniyah, there's -- the proportion is predominantly military there, providing training for the national police and a smaller portion of civilian. But elsewhere it's the reverse. For example, the majority of the Iraqi police liaison officers are civilian. The training teams tend to be -- tend to be military. So I think that gives you a feel.

Q General, could you describe how you're using information technology in the police force?

GEN. WEIGHILL: Are you -- so you're -- yeah, you're -- if you're referring to the gradual process of going from analog to digital, what I can tell you is that the Iraqi police have a highly sophisticated command and control network called Iraqi Command and Control Network -- IC2N, which is up and running and provides sophisticated non-secure and secure data and voice communications. It also acts as a (bearer ?) for management information systems that are gradually being introduced into the ministry.

You know, as with our countries, these processes take a while to proscribe the requirement, to procure the right type of kit. In a place like Iraq you can't install it overnight. It takes time. But I would say that at the moment, if I'm honest, the ministry of Interior and the police are more analog than they are digital. For example, the majority of policemen are paid with cash, so cash is taken out to the police stations. They're paid their Iraqi dinars and then off they go.

I think over time we're going to see -- through 2007 and 2008 -- the introduction of management information systems -- that's human resource, information management systems, financial systems -- that will improve the sort of electronic passage of data and information, including pay as well and numbers of police and locations of police, et cetera, et cetera. But it is going to take time.

But I -- if I were to predict that --if we're still mainly analog at the moment, I would predict that by the end of 2008 that the Iraqi civil security forces will be more digital.

Q Great.

Q General, Mark Finkelstein again.

As somebody who has been (seconded ?) and is working closely with U.S. forces there, I imagine you're quite aware of the situation in the United States regarding the adoption of a supplemental budget for our operations in Iraq. Could you speak to that, and particularly to the impact on your operations that a delay might have?

GEN. WEIGHILL: Yeah. You should be aware that I -- wherever possible I try not to get involved in politics. (Laughs.) And I -- but I am --

Q But not as a political matter -- just as a practical matter in terms of impact on your operations.

GEN. WEIGHILL: Yeah. I mean, to be frank -- and I can say this because I've discussed this with my boss -- I don't think there's going to be any impact whatsoever. And the reason I say that is that we accept there have -- there will be some delays in terms of the funding from Washington out here. And what we've simply done is to program our activities and assistance to the police to conform to that programming -- that profile that's been programmed this year.

We in the police are probably in a slightly better position than the Iraqi army insofar as the money that is spent is supplied by the United States in support of the Iraqi police is a smaller proportion of those funds than is spent on the Iraqi army because they're very, very heavily equipment-biased, you know, whereas the police is principally the man. So the large proportion -- nearly 80 percent of the cost of supporting the police are in personnel in pay. Only 20 percent is really equipment and infrastructure, capital costs and stuff like that.

So we're not going to really see any -- any decline in the way that business is done here from the civilian security force perspective as a result of that funding profile. I can't speak on behalf of the Ministry of Defense.

Q But could you just clarify, because you said that in essence you're conforming your schedule of operations to your expectations regarding the budget? Isn't that in and of itself a form of an impact?

GEN. WEIGHILL: No, no. Perhaps I didn't make that -- the profile that is being presented to us doesn't alter the way in which we're doing our business. The way in which we have predicted the coalition force support to the police in 2007 remains largely unaltered. I mean, and I -- you know, and I'm thinking both in terms of the performance aspect -- that is, what we do with regard to the training and the provision of liaison to the police and also infrastructure support, equipment support, and the nature of the work that we do with the ministry -- within the Ministry of Interior with regard to capacity building.

So from my perspective, I don't see any appreciable decline at all with regard to the funding that's coming from Washington. I mean, what is interesting is that the Iraqi central government budget for the police in 2007 almost doubled from 2006. So actually the Iraqi government is contributing significantly to the way in which business is conducted throughout 2007.

And so the answer to your question is -- and there's two ways to say it, of course. I mean, we aren't -- (inaudible) -- but as far as I'm concerned, it's business as normal.

There's absolutely, as far as I can see, no change to the way that we're going to do our business with regard to the funding profile that's coming in from Washington.

Q Thank you, sir.

OPERATOR: All right, sir. Thank you very much for joining us. We're about out of time here.

GEN. WEIGHILL: Not at all.

OPERATOR: If you have a closing statement, we can make that now.

GEN. WEIGHILL: Yeah. Yeah, sure.

I mean, I think that -- I left the United Kingdom two months ago, and I came out here with perhaps the view that prevails in the United Kingdom -- I can't speak for the United States -- which is that the Iraqi police are emphatically infiltrated with, you know, sectarian issues; they're not trusted by the population; that they have difficulties in undertaking their tasks. I have found the opposite to be the case. I work on a daily basis in the Ministry of Interior building with people -- 6,000 -- (inaudible) -- Iraqis working in that building. We're becoming good friends, colleagues -- and an enormous amount of industry to try and ensure that the Iraqi police can operate and function effectively on the ground. And every -- pretty much every contact I've had with the police as well is that these boys, these -- (inaudible) -- and policewomen are doing a pretty good job in highly demanding circumstances. And I think as you would say in your country, as far as I'm concerned they're patriots. So it's positive rather than negative.

But anyway, it's been a pleasure talking to you, and I hope you have a lovely day.

Q Thank you.

OPERATOR: All right. Thank you very much, sir, and hopefully we can do this again.

GEN. WEIGHILL: Okay.

OPERATOR: Thank you very much.

GEN. WEIGHILL: Okay. Okay, bye-bye.

OPERATOR: Good-bye.

#####

®FC-⁻END

®FL-⁻

